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Advancement of women

Status of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

Report of the Secretary-General**

Summary

The present report is submitted in compliance with General Assembly resolution 60/230 of 23 December 2005 on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit to it at its sixty-second session a report on the status of the Convention and the implementation of the resolution. It covers the period from 1 August 2005 to 15 August 2007.

* A/62/150.

** The report was submitted late so as to reflect the most recent developments from the thirty-ninth session of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

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I. Status of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

1. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women was adopted by the General Assembly by resolution 34/180 of 18 December 1979. It was opened for signature, ratification and accession in New York on 1 March 1980 and, in accordance with article 27 of the Convention, entered into force on 3 September 1981.

2. As at 15 August 2007, 185 States had ratified, acceded to or succeeded to the Convention, of which 81 had acceded to it and 8 had succeeded to it. This represents an additional five ratifications in the current reporting period from 1 August 2005 to 15 August 2007 (see A/60/206 for the previous report). The most recent States to ratify or accede to the Convention were Brunei Darussalam, on 24 May 2006; Cook Islands, on 11 August 2006; Marshall Islands, on 2 March 2006; Montenegro, on 23 October 2006; and Oman, on 7 February 2006. The list of States parties to the Convention and the dates of their ratification or accession to the Convention are contained in the report of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women on its thirty-seventh, thirty-eighth and thirty-ninth sessions.[1]

3. As at 15 August 2007, 49 States parties had deposited with the Secretary-General instruments of acceptance of the amendment to article 20, paragraph 1, of the Convention, relating to the meeting time of the Committee. The additional four acceptances since the submission of the last report were by the following States parties: Bangladesh, on 3 May 2007; Georgia, on 30 September 2005; Liberia, on 16 September 2005; and Slovenia, on 10 November 2006.

4. During the period from 1 August 2005 to 15 August 2007, reservations were made by Brunei Darussalam, which entered a general reservation as well as reservations to article 9, paragraph 2, and article 29, paragraph 1; Cook Islands to article 2 (f), article 5 (a), and article 11 (2) (b); and Oman, which entered a general reservation as well as reservations to article 9, paragraph 2, article 15, paragraph 4, article 16, subparagraphs (a), (c) and (f), and article 29, paragraph 1.

5. During the same period, objections to reservations were received from Austria, Belgium, Canada, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

6. During the period under review, withdrawals of reservations were received from Austria to parts of article 11; Cook Islands to article 2 (f), article 5 (a), and article 11 (2) (b); Kuwait to article 7 (a); New Zealand in respect of service in the armed forces; Singapore (without reference to an article of the Convention); and the United Kingdom to article 15, paragraph 4.

[1] To be issued as *Official Records of the General Assembly, Sixty-second Session, Supplement No. 38* (A/62/38).

II. Status of the Optional Protocol to the Convention

7. By its resolution 54/4 of 6 October 1999, the General Assembly adopted the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. The Optional Protocol was opened for signature, ratification and accession at United Nations Headquarters on 10 December 1999 and, in accordance with article 16, paragraph 1, entered into force on 22 December 2000.

8. As at 15 August 2007, 88 States parties had ratified or acceded to the Optional Protocol. This represents an increase of 17 ratifications since the submission of the last report. These 17 States parties were: Antigua and Barbuda, on 5 June 2006; Argentina, on 20 March 2007; Armenia, on 14 September 2007; Botswana, on 21 February 2007; Bulgaria, on 20 September 2006; Burkina Faso, on 10 October 2005; Colombia, on 23 January 2007; Maldives, on 13 March 2006; Moldova, on 28 February 2006; Montenegro, on 23 October 2006; Nepal, on 15 June 2007; the Republic of Korea, on 18 October 2006; Saint Kitts and Nevis, on 20 January 2006; San Marino, on 15 September 2005; South Africa, on 18 October 2005; the United Republic of Tanzania, on 12 January 2006; and Vanuatu, on 17 May 2007.

III. Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

A. Capacity to fulfil its mandate

Fulfilment by States parties of reporting obligations

9. Article 18, paragraph 1, of the Convention provides that States parties undertake to submit reports on the implementation of the Convention within one year after its entry into force for the State party concerned, and thereafter at least every four years and, further, whenever the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women so requests.

10. Between 1 August 2005 and 15 August 2007, the Secretary-General received the reports of the following 44 States parties: Belgium (combined fifth and sixth periodic report); Belize (combined third and fourth periodic report); Bhutan (seventh periodic report); Bolivia (combined second, third and fourth periodic report); Brazil (sixth periodic report); Burundi (combined second, third and fourth periodic report); Cameroon (combined second and third periodic report); Canada (combined sixth and seventh periodic report); Cook Islands (initial report); Ecuador (combined sixth and seventh periodic report); El Salvador (seventh periodic report); Estonia (fourth periodic report); France (sixth periodic report); Honduras (combined fourth, fifth and sixth periodic report); Hungary (sixth periodic report); India (combined second and third periodic report); Jordan (combined third and fourth periodic report); Kenya (combined fifth and sixth periodic report); Kyrgyzstan (third periodic report); Lebanon (third periodic report); Liechtenstein (third periodic report); Luxembourg (fifth periodic report); Madagascar (combined second, third, fourth and fifth periodic report); Mexico (sixth periodic report); Mongolia (fifth periodic report); Morocco (combined third and fourth periodic report); Myanmar (combined second and third periodic report); New Zealand (sixth periodic report); Nigeria (sixth periodic report); Norway (seventh periodic report); Portugal (sixth

periodic report); the Republic of Korea (sixth periodic report); Saint Lucia (combined initial, second, third, fourth, fifth and sixth periodic report); Saudi Arabia (combined initial and second periodic report); Serbia (initial report); Sierra Leone (combined initial, second, third, fourth and fifth periodic report); Slovakia (combined second, third and fourth periodic report); Slovenia (fourth periodic report); Sweden (combined sixth and seventh periodic report); the Syrian Arab Republic (initial report); the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (sixth periodic report); the United Republic of Tanzania (combined third, fourth and fifth periodic report); Uruguay (combined fourth, fifth, sixth and seventh periodic report); and Yemen (sixth periodic report).

11. During the period covered by the present report, the Committee held six sessions, as follows: thirty-fourth session, from 16 January to 3 February 2006; thirty-fifth session, from 15 May to 2 June 2006; thirty-sixth session, from 7 to 25 August 2006; thirty-seventh session, from 15 January to 2 February 2007; thirty-eighth session, from 14 May to 1 June 2007; and thirty-ninth session, from 23 July to 10 August 2007. During these sessions, the Committee considered 144 (many combined) reports submitted by 69 States parties: four initial reports (Cook Islands, Mauritania, Serbia and the Syrian Arab Republic); four combined initial and second periodic reports (Malaysia, Mozambique, the Niger and Turkmenistan); seven combined initial, second and third periodic reports (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cambodia, Eritrea, Pakistan, Tajikistan, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Vanuatu); two combined initial, second, third, fourth and fifth periodic reports (Sierra Leone and Togo); two combined initial, second, third, fourth, fifth and sixth periodic reports (Cape Verde and Saint Lucia); two second periodic reports (Kazakhstan and Liechtenstein); seven combined second and third periodic reports (Azerbaijan, Georgia, India, Maldives, Moldova, Namibia and Uzbekistan); two combined second, third, fourth and fifth periodic reports (Malawi and Mali); four third periodic reports (the Czech Republic, Liechtenstein, Singapore and Suriname); two combined third and fourth periodic reports (Belize and Jordan); three combined third, fourth and fifth periodic reports (Cyprus, Ghana and Mauritius); three fourth periodic reports (Chile, Estonia and the Netherlands); five combined fourth and fifth periodic reports (Australia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Indonesia, Poland and Thailand); three combined fourth, fifth and sixth periodic reports (Guinea, Honduras and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela); two fifth periodic reports (Jamaica and Republic of Korea); five combined fifth and sixth periodic reports (China, Colombia, Cuba, Kenya and the Philippines); thirteen sixth periodic reports (Austria, Brazil, Denmark, Greece, Guatemala, Hungary, Mexico, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Peru, Poland, the Republic of Korea and Romania); and one seventh periodic report (Norway).

Reports awaiting consideration, overdue reports and requests for follow-up reports

12. As at 15 August 2007, 32 (mainly combined) reports submitted by 31 States parties had yet to be considered by the Committee.

13. As at 15 August 2007, 125 States parties had a total of 215 overdue reports, of which 30 were initial reports, 25 second periodic reports, 28 third periodic reports, 39 fourth periodic reports, 23 fifth periodic reports, 43 sixth periodic reports and 27 seventh periodic reports.

14. In the light of the reduction of the backlog of reports awaiting consideration, the Committee has initiated a systematic effort to encourage States parties to submit long overdue initial reports. In doing so, the Committee proceeded on the basis of its decisions 29/1 and 31/III (i), establishing that it would proceed with consideration of the implementation of the Convention in the absence of a report only as a last resort and in the presence of a delegation. The Committee has invited a number of States parties to submit all their overdue reports as a combined report by a specific date, as follows:

(a) Cape Verde and Saint Lucia were invited by the Committee to submit their reports, and Cape Verde submitted its report in June 2005, and Saint Lucia in September 2005. The Committee considered these reports at its thirty-fifth and thirty-sixth sessions, respectively;

(b) Dominica, Guinea-Bissau, Haiti and Liberia were invited by the Committee at its thirty-seventh session to submit all their overdue reports as combined reports by March 2008, for consideration at its forty-third session in 2009;

(c) Bahamas, the Central African Republic, Grenada and Seychelles were invited by the Committee at its thirty-eighth session to submit all their overdue reports as combined reports by the end of 2008, for consideration by the Committee in early 2010;

(d) Chad, the Comoros, Lesotho and Papua New Guinea were invited by the Committee at its thirty-ninth session to submit all their overdue reports as combined reports by July 2009, for consideration by the Committee in late 2010;

As a measure of last resort, and failing the receipt of the reports within the suggested time frame, the Committee will proceed with consideration of the implementation of the Convention in the States parties concerned in the absence of a report.

15. The Committee sent reminder letters to all States parties whose initial reports were overdue as of 2005.

16. Following consideration of India's combined second and third periodic report at its thirty-seventh session, the Committee requested the State party to submit a follow-up report in January 2008 (CEDAW/C/IND/CO/3). At the same session, following consideration of The Netherlands' fourth periodic report, the Committee requested the State party to submit a follow-up report in January 2008 (see CEDAW/C/NLD/CO/4).

B. Working methods of the Committee

17. In order to contribute to the efforts of General Assembly to limit the length of documentation, the Committee dispensed with the inclusion of summaries of the introductory statements of reporting States in its annual report (thirty-fourth session). These 30-minute introductory statements of States parties are posted on the website of the Division for the Advancement of Women. They are also reflected in the Committee's summary records.

18. The Committee's first overview of its working methods, included in the report on its thirtieth session, was updated to reflect in particular the Committee's working

methods in parallel chambers (see CEDAW/C/2007/I/4/Add.1). This overview intends to make the Committee's working methods readily accessible to States parties and others interested in the implementation of the Convention. The overview is also available on the website of the Division for the Advancement of Women.

19. During the period covered in the present report, the most significant new developments in the Committee's working methods occurred in regard to its work in parallel chambers for purposes of consideration of reports. Following the adoption of General Assembly resolution 60/230, the Committee held three annual sessions in 2006 and 2007, respectively, as compared to two annual sessions in previous years. Furthermore, the Committee met in parallel chambers during three of these six sessions, i.e. at its thirty-sixth, thirty-seventh and thirty-ninth sessions.

20. The Committee held a preliminary discussion of its working methods pertaining to its meetings in parallel chambers at its thirty-fourth session and adopted them at its thirty-fifth session.[2] These cover in particular the procedure for establishing parallel chambers, including their membership; officers of the Committee in relation to parallel chambers; the role of the country rapporteur and preparation of concluding comments; modalities for consideration of reports in parallel chambers; and adoption of concluding comments in Plenary. It held an in-depth discussion of these working methods during an informal meeting in Berlin from 2 to 4 May 2006, based on a background paper prepared by its secretariat. The Committee also benefited from the insights of one member of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, who shared the experience of that Committee in regard to its meetings in parallel chambers.

21. The Committee undertook regular assessments of its working methods in parallel chambers, and improved these based on the experience gained. Adjustments were made in regard to the role of the country rapporteurs including the due date, format and content of their briefing notes; coordination and cooperation among members in a chamber, and between the two chambers, respectively; time management during the constructive dialogue; and the role of the Chairperson in guiding the constructive dialogue.

22. The Committee first designated country rapporteurs at its nineteenth session. At its thirty-fifth session, it adopted guidelines on the role and functions of the country rappporteur which consolidated the tasks assigned to the country rapporteur in regard to the three phases of the consideration of reports, i.e. the preparation of lists of issues and questions for the pre-session working group; the consideration of the report(s) of the State party, in particular the identification of issues and priorities to be raised during the constructive dialogue; and the preparation and finalization of draft concluding comments.[3] Country rapporteurs were designated for all States parties, and these experts took on additional responsibilities in coordinating the work in chambers, and ensuring that all experts could contribute to the dialogue in a timely and meaningful manner. The Committee also continued to use country task forces for consideration of reports in plenary meetings.

23. Since the Committee held three annual sessions during the reporting period, it adjusted the scheduling of its pre-session working group so as to ensure that enough

[2] See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Sixty-first Session, Supplement No. 38* (A/61/38), part two, paras. 363-380.

[3] Ibid., paras. 388-399.

time was available to States parties to respond to their respective lists of issues and questions, as well as to ensure availability of the responses in all official languages for the sessions when these reports were considered. Thus, the pre-session working group usually met two sessions in advance of consideration of a report rather than one. The number of experts who participated in the pre-session working group was determined in a flexible manner. In preparing lists of issues and questions, the pre-session working groups focused on progress made in Convention implementation since consideration of the previous reports, the impact of measures taken by States parties, as well as on follow-up action to the Committee's previous concluding comments. The pre-session working groups adhered to the agreed limit of not more than 30 clear and direct questions per list. States parties were advised of the Committee's established page limitation for responses of 25 to 30 pages.

24. The Committee now routinely includes the last paragraph of its concluding comments that establishes the due date for the State party's next periodic report. In cases where the next periodic report is overdue or becomes due within a year of the date of consideration, the Committee requests the State party to submit its next report as a combined periodic report.[4]

25. The Committee continued its interaction with the specialized agencies and other bodies of the United Nations system that contribute to its work and support the full implementation of the Convention at the national level. The Committee adopted guidelines for submission of reports by United Nations specialized agencies and other bodies, which refer to the country-specific information that the agencies and bodies can provide to the Committee; and to the work of these agencies and bodies in contributing to the implementation of the Convention at the national level.[5] The Committee especially appreciated the efforts of a number of United Nations country teams who submitted joint information in conjunction with consideration of reports, and encouraged the entities of the United Nations system to expand this practice and, in particular, to make such information available to the Committee's pre-session working group. The Committee encouraged the United Nations country teams to undertake follow-up activities on the basis of the Committee's concluding comments at the country level, and to submit further information to the Committee during future reporting by the respective State party.

26. The Committee continued its practice of meeting informally with non-governmental organizations wishing to present country-specific information on States parties whose reports were before it, at the beginning of the first and second weeks of the session. The Committee's pre-session working group also provided opportunities for non-governmental organizations to present written and oral information. General and session-specific information notes for non-governmental organizations are regularly posted on the website of the Division for the Advancement of Women.

27. The Committee confirmed its interest in establishing interaction with national human rights institutions, and continued to examine the practice of other human rights treaty bodies. Two national human rights institutions addressed the

[4] Document CEDAW/C/2007/III/2 gives an overview of due dates of future combined reports. An update will be contained in CEDAW/C/2008/I/2.

[5] See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Sixty-first Session, Supplement No. 38*, part one, annex II.

Committee at its thirty-ninth session, during a separate segment of the Committee's meeting allocated to interaction with non-governmental organizations.

28. The Committee continued to emphasize the important role of parliamentarians in the implementation of the Convention and follow-up to concluding comments. It encouraged the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) to submit country-specific information pertaining to the implementation of the Convention in States parties. The IPU now regularly submits such information to the Committee.

29. The Committee continued its practice of adopting statements in relation to particular events or developments. During the reporting period, these included a statement entitled "Towards a harmonized and integrated human rights treaty bodies system" at the thirty-fifth session;[6] a statement regarding the situation of women in the Middle East at the thirty-sixth session;[7] and a statement on United Nations reform pertaining to its gender equality structure at the thirty-ninth session, contained in part three, annex XI, of the annual report.[7]

30. The Committee convened two informal meetings with States parties to the Convention, on 1 June 2006, and on 8 August 2007, respectively. These meetings provided opportunities for Committee experts to brief States parties on the Committee's working methods in regard to its meetings in parallel chambers; and to update them on the Committee's request to the sixty-second session of the General Assembly for an extension of meeting time.

31. During the period under review, the Committee was able to hold its fifth informal meeting. At the invitation of the Government of Germany to mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Committee's work, the Committee met from 2 to 4 May 2006, in Berlin. It used the occasion to finalize its working methods for consideration of reports in parallel chambers; and for a discussion of the reform proposals of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights concerning a standing unified human rights treaty body. In August 2007, the Committee was very pleased to receive an invitation from the Government of Switzerland for an informal working session during the second half of 2007. The Committee proposed that this meeting be held from 24 to 26 October 2007, and intends to take up a number of issues, including revision of its guidelines on reporting; preparation of a general recommendation on article 2 of the Convention; follow-up to the Committee's concluding comments; interaction with national human rights institutions; and its relationship with the Human Rights Council. The Committee also plans to hold an orientation session with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights pertaining to the transfer of the servicing of the Committee to that Office as of 1 January 2008.

32. With the support of a working group, the Committee continued its elaboration of a general recommendation on migrant women. At the invitation of the Committee on Migrant Workers, the Committee agreed to collaborate with that Committee on its further development. Work also continued on a general recommendation on article 2 of the Convention.

33. The Committee welcomes opportunities for discussion with special rapporteurs of the Human Rights Council, on issues of mutual concern. At its thirty-fourth

[6] Ibid., part two, annex I.

[7] Ibid., part three, annex VII.

session, the Committee met with the Special Rapporteur on the right to adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living.

34. The Committee has taken a consistent interest in the question of United Nations reform pertaining to its gender equality architecture. The Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women regularly briefed and discussed this question and current developments with Committee experts.

35. The Committee continued to contribute actively to the work of the human rights treaty bodies, especially within the framework of the annual meetings of chairpersons of treaty bodies, and the inter-committee meeting. The Chairperson, as well as designated members of the Committee, participated in these meetings in 2006 (19 to 23 June 2006) and 2007 (18 to 22 June 2007). The Committee endorsed the guidelines on reporting under international human rights treaties, including guidelines on a common core document and treaty-specific documents (HRI/MC/2006/3 and Corr.1), and initiated work to revise its own reporting guidelines accordingly. It participated actively in a working group on harmonization of working methods of treaty bodies (see HRI/MC/2007/2 and Add.1), as well as in a working group on reservations (HRI/MC/2007/5). The Committee contributed to the discussion about reform of the human rights treaty bodies system, in particular through its above-mentioned statement "Towards a harmonized and integrated human rights treaty bodies system". Most recently, the Committee supported the proposal of the inter-committee meeting that it meet twice annually, including for purposes of making recommendations for the improvement and harmonization of working methods of human rights treaty bodies, and suggested that harmonization of working methods should also aim to enhance the efficiency of the committees' working methods. It proposed that the inter-committee meeting, at its next meeting, establish a set of issues for discussion, within a specified time frame, and in order of priority. The Committee submitted suggestions for such priorities, and strongly encouraged the inter-committee meeting to conduct a self-assessment of its own working methods and efficiency (thirty-ninth session).

36. In October 2006, the Secretary-General informed the Chairperson of the Committee of his conclusion that common objectives would be best served by the United Nations if responsibility for supporting the Committee were to be transferred to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. The Chairperson subsequently conveyed this decision to the members of the Committee. The Committee held discussions with the High Commissioner pertaining to the transfer of servicing at its thirty-seventh session, and the Committee subsequently wrote to the Secretary-General and the High Commissioner conveying its views on this question. Staff of the Office of the High Commissioner observed the thirty-eighth and thirty-ninth sessions of the Committee.

C. Working methods with regard to the Optional Protocol

37. During the reporting period, the Committee continued to carry out its activities under the Optional Protocol to the Convention. On average, it has allocated two meetings per session to deal with all matters relating to the Optional Protocol.

38. The Committee's Working Group on Communications under the Optional Protocol held four three-day sessions in conjunction with the Committee's thirty-fourth, thirty-sixth, thirty-seventh and thirty-ninth sessions. It also held an informal

two-day meeting after the close of the Committee's thirty-eighth session. To date, the Working Group has registered 15 communications, of which 6 were registered during the reporting period.

39. During its thirty-fourth session, the Committee took action on communication 8/2005 (*Rahime Kayhan v. Turkey*), declaring it inadmissible for failure to exhaust domestic remedies under article 4, paragraph 1, of the Optional Protocol. At the thirty-fifth session it deferred action on communications until the following session. At its thirty-sixth session, the Committee took action on two communications. It concluded that there had been no discriminatory treatment of the author in communication 3/2004 (*Dung Thi Thuy Nguyen v. The Netherlands*). The Committee was of the view that the facts in communication 4/2004 (*Ms. Andrea Szijjarto v. Hungary*) revealed a violation of articles 10 (h), 12 and 16, paragraph 1, of the Optional Protocol.

40. During its thirty-seventh session, the Committee declared communication 11/2006 (*Ms. Constance Ragan Salgado v. the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland*) inadmissible *ratione temporis* under article 4, paragraph 2 (e), and for the author's failure to exhaust domestic remedies under article 4, paragraph 1, of the Optional Protocol. During its thirty-eighth session, the Committee declared communication 10/2005 (*Ms. N. S. F. v. the United Kingdom*) inadmissible for the author's failure to exhaust domestic remedies under article 4, paragraph 1, of the Optional Protocol.

41. During its thirty-ninth session, the Committee took action on three communications. In communications 5/2005 (*the descendants of Şahide Goekce [deceased] v. Austria*) and 6/2005 (*the descendants of Fatma Yildirim [deceased] v. Austria*), the Committee found that the State party violated its obligations under article 2 (a) and (c) through (f), and 3 of the Convention, read in conjunction with article 1 of the Convention and general recommendation 19 of the Committee and the corresponding rights of the deceased to life and physical and mental integrity. The Committee declared communication 7/2005 (*Cristina Muñoz-Vargas y Sainz de Vicuña v. Spain*) inadmissible *ratione temporis* under article 4, paragraph 2 (e), of the Optional Protocol.

42. During the reporting period, the Committee began its follow-up activities to the views on communications. At its thirty-fourth session, it appointed two of its members as ad hoc rapporteurs on follow-up to the views on communication No. 2/2003, *Ms. A. T. v. Hungary*. At the following session and on the basis of the recommendations of the rapporteurs to communication No. 2/2003, the Committee requested further follow-up information from the State party. At its thirty-sixth session, on the recommendation of the rapporteurs, the Committee decided to bring to a close its follow-up on the views of communication 2/2003 and that any further information on follow-up to the views on this case would be requested in the framework of the reporting procedure under article 18 of the Convention.

43. At its thirty-eighth session, the Committee appointed two of its members as ad hoc rapporteurs on follow-up to the views on communication No. 4/2004, *Ms. Andrea Szijjarto v. Hungary* and, on their recommendation, requested further information on follow-up of the State party. The mandates of the rapporteurs on follow-up to the views on communication No. 4/2004 have not yet been brought to an end.

44. In addition to its consideration and action on individual communications and follow-up to views, and on the recommendations of the Working Group on Communications under the Optional Protocol, the Committee amended rules 60, 63, 64 and 69 of its rules of procedure in chapter XVI entitled "Procedures for the consideration of communications received under the Optional Protocol" (see part three, chap. V of the annual report).[1]

D. Request for extension of the meeting time of the Committee

45. Based on the request of the Committee, the General Assembly, in its resolution 60/230, granted the Committee an extension of meeting time to eliminate the backlog of reports awaiting consideration. As a result, the Committee was able to consider the reports of a total of 69 States parties, namely of 31 States parties in 2006, and of 38 States parties in 2007. This was more than twice the 32 States parties which the Committee considers when it meets for two annual sessions. This extended meeting time has enabled the Committee to significantly reduce the backlog of reports awaiting consideration. At the time of the completion of the previous report, the reports of 58 States parties awaited consideration, compared to the reports of 31 States parties as of today. An updated table indicating the status of ratifications, the number of reports received annually since 1982, as well as the number of reports considered by the Committee annually, is contained in annex I to the present report.

46. Having considered the progress made in reducing the backlog, and taking into consideration all its responsibilities under the Convention and the Optional Protocol, the Committee decided to request the General Assembly for a further extension of its meeting time, beyond the biennium 2006-2007. This request is contained in decision 39/I, in part three of its annual report,[1] where the Committee requests that the General Assembly: (a) authorize the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, as a permanent measure from 2008 onwards, to hold three annual sessions of three weeks each, with a one-week pre-session working group for each session; and (b) authorize the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women to meet, as a temporary measure in the biennium 2008-2009, for up to seven days in parallel chambers during one of its annual sessions in each year of the biennium, for the purpose of considering reports submitted by States parties under article 18 of the Convention. The Committee also requests that its Working Group on Communications under the Optional Protocol, which is authorized to meet twice a year for a total of 10 working days, be granted the opportunity to meet three times a year, for a total of 10 working days, immediately prior to, or after the scheduled sessions of the Committee.

47. In adopting this decision, the Committee noted that this extended meeting time will ensure that it can fully eliminate the backlog of reports awaiting consideration; ensure that incoming reports are considered in a timely manner; enhance its efforts at ensuring that monitoring of the implementation of the Convention in States parties with long overdue reports is undertaken; and discharge all its other responsibilities under the Convention and the Optional Protocol.

48. A statement of programme budget implications pertaining to the extension of meeting time is contained in the annual report of the Committee. The Committee requested that the basis for calculating the costs for the extended meeting time be

revisited so as to ensure that these are in line with the actual requirements of the Committee and that the statement clearly explain the different parameters used for calculating the current requirements as compared to those of a similar request of the Committee in 2005.[8]

49. Furthermore, and as a temporary measure for the biennium 2008-2009, the Committee decided that summary records of its meetings should be issued in English only, in order to reduce the overall costs of its sessions. The Committee agreed to revisit this decision in 2009, when it will also assess its requirements for any further temporary extension of its meeting time.

IV. Efforts to encourage universal ratification of the Convention, its Optional Protocol and acceptance of the amendment to article 20, paragraph 1, of the Convention

50. The Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women and the Director of the Division for the Advancement of Women have continued their efforts to encourage universal ratification of the Convention and the Optional Protocol, and to ensure acceptance of the amendment to article 20, paragraph 1, of the Convention, which relates to the meeting time allocated to the Committee. They have encouraged related action in their meetings with delegations, as well as in statements and presentations at United Nations Headquarters, at other duty stations, and at conferences and other forums.

V. Technical assistance provided to States parties

51. The Division for the Advancement of Women continues to offer technical assistance to States parties on implementation and reporting under the Convention and the Beijing Platform for Action, as well as on implementation and follow-up to the Committee's concluding comments. Assistance also involves ratification and use of the Optional Protocol.

52. During the reporting period, the Division organized one subregional training workshop and one national workshop on implementation and follow-up to the Committee's concluding comments. The subregional workshop was held in Bangkok, Thailand, from 6 to 9 November 2006 in collaboration with the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific. Government officials, members of Parliament, non-governmental organizations and members of the United Nations country teams from six countries in the Asia-Pacific region participated in the event. Participants adopted a statement on challenges and opportunities for action in follow-up to concluding comments. The national workshop was held at the request of the Government of Cambodia and took place in Phnom Penh from 1 to 2 November 2006. It was attended by 40 participants from 15 Ministries and Government bodies, non-governmental organizations and observers from United Nations entities. In both cases, experts from the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women served as resource persons and facilitators.

[8] Ibid., *Sixtieth Session, Supplement No. 38* (A/60/38), part two, annex IX.

53. A subregional workshop on follow-up to, and implementation of the concluding observations/comments of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women took place in Cairo, Egypt, from 19 to 22 December 2005. The workshop was jointly organized by the Division and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. It was attended by over 50 participants from six countries of the North African region and included government officials, members of the judiciary, representatives of national human rights institutions, national non-governmental organizations, the League of Arab States and United Nations agencies. Experts from both Committees served as resource persons and facilitators at the workshop.

54. One of the priorities of the Division's programme of technical cooperation includes the provision of sustained and comprehensive support to post-conflict countries to implement the Convention. As part of this programme, the Division supports States parties emerging from conflict to take advantage of the opportunity that the process of post-conflict reconstruction offers to review their legislative and policy framework and carry out reforms to align their laws and policies with the provisions and obligations of the Convention. In the implementation of this programme, the Division has benefited from the support and advice of the United Nations missions and the United Nations country teams in the States parties concerned. Funding for this programme was provided by the Governments of Ireland, Norway and New Zealand.

55. At the invitation of the respective Governments, the Division organized consultation missions on the Convention to Afghanistan, from 26 to 30 August 2006, and to Haiti, from 16 to 20 April 2007. These consultations were designed to increase awareness and visibility of the Convention at the highest political levels, and provided an opportunity for assessing the current status of national implementation of the Convention. They resulted in recommendations for priority action by Government and non-governmental organizations. The consultations will be followed by training and other capacity-building activities.

56. In Afghanistan, five experts held meetings with key ministries and institutions, the leadership of Parliament, including the Women and Human Rights Parliamentary Committee, the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission, United Nations entities and non-governmental organizations. In Haiti, three experts held consultations with high-level officials from ministries, members of Parliament, non-governmental organizations and the United Nations country team, and follow-up activities are under way to support the State party in the preparation of its combined initial, second, third, fourth, fifth and sixth periodic report under article 18 of the Convention, which the Committee has requested be submitted by March 2008.

57. Also at the invitation of the Government, the Division organized a consultation mission to Liberia, from 12 to 15 June 2006, where four experts on the Convention met with high-level officials from eight ministries, members of Parliament, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, non-governmental organizations and the United Nations country team. The experts also met with President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, who pledged her full support for efforts to improve national implementation of the Convention in Liberia. The Division subsequently organized a training workshop for staff of the Ministry of Gender and Development on the Convention including reporting, designed to strengthen the capacity of ministry staff to carry out

their functions as catalysts for gender equality. The workshop took place from 19 to 21 March 2007, with the participation of 30 staff members of the Ministry of Gender and Development. This workshop was complemented by a second workshop, from 18 to 22 June 2007, on report-writing for staff from the Ministry of Gender and Development and several line ministries expected to be directly involved in preparation of the report. Both events were facilitated by two experts of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and staff of the Division. At the request of the Minister of Gender and Development, and based on the discussions during the two workshops, experts prepared a framework for preparation of the report as well as a timeline. The Division anticipates that a further workshop will be convened in November 2007 to consider a first draft report and identify remaining gaps and challenges. This technical assistance is especially timely as the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women requested Liberia to submit its combined initial, second, third, fourth, fifth and sixth periodic report under article 18 of the Convention by March 2008.

58. The Division continued to support Sierra Leone in the implementation of the Convention and preparation of its report, in a programme that had started in 2004. From 20 to 22 June 2006, the Division convened a workshop to review the draft report under article 18 of the Convention and a national validation workshop on the revised report on 31 October 2006. The State party submitted its combined initial, second, third, fourth and fifth periodic report under article 18 of the Convention in December 2006. The report was considered by the Committee in a constructive dialogue on 17 May 2007.

59. The Division continued its collaboration with the Inter-Parliamentary Union in one-day briefing sessions for parliamentarians from countries whose reports had recently been or would soon be considered by the Committee. The sessions took place in October 2005 and 2006. Experts from the Committee served as presenters and resource persons. At the 2006 session, the event had, as a special focus for discussion, the question of violence against women, and in particular the role of parliamentarians in the follow-up to the in-depth study of the Secretary-General on violence against women (A/61/122/Add.1 and Corr.1)

60. A staff member of the Division participated as a resource person in two workshops on the Optional Protocol for lawyers, organized by non-governmental organizations in Bulgaria and Poland, from 30 March to 5 April 2006, and 20 to 27 September 2006, respectively. A staff member served as resource person on the use of the Optional Protocol at a workshop for representatives of non-governmental organizations of the South-East Asian region, held in Maldives from 11 to 17 November 2006.

61. In April and June 2007, at the invitation of the Government of Mexico, a staff member of the Division participated in three workshops of a series of international workshops on international instruments on women's human rights, persons with disabilities, and gender-based violence in Mexico.

VI. Dissemination of the Convention, its Optional Protocol and information on the work of the Committee

62. The Division for the Advancement of Women maintains a page on its website that is dedicated to the Convention and its Optional Protocol and the work of the Committee. The text of the Convention and its Optional Protocol, the reports of States parties, lists of issues and questions, responses from States parties, States parties' introductory statements and composition of delegations presenting reports, the Committee's concluding comments and documents prepared for the Committee, as well as other relevant information concerning the Convention, its Optional Protocol, the working methods of the Committee and the meetings of States parties are posted on the website. The Committee's concluding comments are also disseminated through the electronic listserv administered by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

63. The Division regularly sends to the resident coordinators in States parties concerned the Committee's concluding comments with an invitation to support that State party in its follow-up efforts.

64. On 23 July 2007, the Committee celebrated the twenty-fifth anniversary of its work with a panel of high-level guests, including the President of the sixty-first session of the General Assembly, the High Commissioner for Human Rights, a Vice-Chairperson of the Commission on the Status of Women, the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women and two representatives of non-governmental organizations. One of the experts of the Committee as well as its Chairperson also made presentations. The Division prepared several information notes on the occasion, including on the history of the Committee, its membership, Bureaux, and Chairpersons. These materials are available on the website at http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/25anniversary.htm.

VII. Conclusions and recommendations

65. **The year 2007 marks the twenty-fifth anniversary of the work of the Committee, which held its first session from 18 to 22 October 1982 at the United Nations Office at Vienna. Since then, the Committee held 39 sessions, examined 401 reports submitted by 154 States parties, and adopted 25 general recommendations. It has registered 15 communications under the Optional Protocol. Of these, five have been declared inadmissible and five have been decided on the merits. The Committee has completed one inquiry.**

66. **The Committee's use of the extended meeting time approved by the General Assembly in December 2005 has resulted in a significant reduction of the backlog of reports awaiting consideration and in a more timely consideration of reports. It has also achieved an increase in the number of decisions taken under the Optional Protocol. The Committee has used efficient working methods for its meetings in parallel chambers, and has adjusted these based on experience gained. It has enhanced its interaction with stakeholders in the implementation of the Convention, including with national human rights institutions, and has actively contributed to the common efforts of all treaty bodies to strengthen the human rights treaty bodies system. It has undertaken a systematic effort to encourage States parties to submit overdue initial reports.**

Technical assistance provided by the Division for the Advancement of Women, funded to a large extent by extrabudgetary resources, contributed to the enhanced capacity of States parties to implement the Convention, including the reporting obligation.

67. **In the last 10 years, 23 States parties per annum have on average submitted their reports under article 18 of the Convention. While the Committee was able to reduce significantly the backlog of reports awaiting consideration during the last two years, the reports of 31 States parties continue to await consideration. The Committee has concluded that the effective and timely implementation of all its responsibilities under the Convention and the Optional Protocol will require that it be provided on a permanent basis with three annual sessions of three weeks each, and each with a one-week pre-session working group. It has further concluded that, as a temporary measure, the Committee will require additional meeting time in parallel chambers as may be necessary in the light of its workload.**

68. **The General Assembly may wish to approve the request of the Committee for extension of its meeting time, as contained in decision 39/I, in order to enable the Committee to discharge all its responsibilities in a timely and effective manner.**

Annex I

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women: ratification and reporting status as at 15 August 2007

Year and session	*Ratifications by States*	*Reports submitted*	*States parties whose reports were considered*	*Reports considered*
1980	10	—	—	—
1981	21	—	—	—
1982 — first	11	7	—	—
1983 — second	8	12	7	7
1984 — third	11	5	6	6
1985 — fourth	20	4	5	5
1986 — fifth	7	16	8	8
1987 — sixth	3	19	8	8
1988 — seventh	1	12	13	13
1989 — eighth	5	11	9	9
1990 — ninth	4	13	12	12
1991 — tenth	7	17	10	10
1992 — eleventh	10	13	9	9
1993 — twelfth	11	12	11	12
1994 — thirteenth	8	12	15	17
1995 — fourteenth	13	7	10	11
1996 — fifteenth	3	17	9	9
1997 — sixteenth and seventeenth	7	19	18	23
1998 — eighteenth and nineteenth	2	23	16	18
1999 — twentieth and twenty-first	2	24	14	17
2000 — twenty-second and twenty-third	1	24	15	20
2001 — twenty-fourth and twenty-fifth	3	11	16	22
2002 — twenty-sixth, twenty-seventh and exceptional sessions	2	29	26	31
2003 — twenty-eighth and twenty-ninth	5	24	16	23
2004 — thirtieth and thirty-first	4	34	16	19
2005 — thirty-second and thirty-third	1	23	16	18
2006 — thirty-fourth, thirty-fifth and thirty-sixth	5	22	31	31
2007 — thirty-seventh, thirty-eighth and thirty-ninth[a]	1	14	38	41

[a] As at 15 August.

Annex II

Human rights treaty bodies: number of ratifications; number and duration of sessions per year as at 15 August 2007

Human rights instrument	*Number of ratifications*	*Treaty body*	*Number of sessions per year and approximate dates*	*Number of reports considered annually (average)*
Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (biennium 2006-2007)	185	Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women	Three, of three weeks each (in January, May and July/August), each preceded by a one-week pre-session working group of five members	31 (2006) 38 (2007) (includes parallel chambers)
Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women	88	Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women	Two, of three days each (in January and July)	
International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights	160	Human Rights Committee	Three, of three weeks each (April/May, July/August and October/November)	12
Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights	109	Human Rights Committee	Three one-week working groups, of at least five members	
International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights	156	Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights	Two, of three weeks each (April/May and November/December), each with a one-week pre-session working group of five members	10
International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination	173	Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination	Two, of three weeks each (February/March and July/August)	16-22
International Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (declaration under article 14 — communications procedure)	47	Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination		
Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment	144	Committee against Torture	Two, of three weeks, respectively, with a one-week pre-session working group (April/May and November)	14

Human rights instrument	*Number of ratifications*	*Treaty body*	*Number of sessions per year and approximate dates*	*Number of reports considered annually (average)*
Convention on the Rights of the Child, and two Optional Protocols	193	Committee on the Rights of the Child	Three, of three weeks each (January, May and September), each with a one-week pre-session working group of the entire Committee	48 (2006) 30-42 (2007) (includes Optional Protocol reports and parallel chambers)
International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families	37	Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families	One, of one week	1